1; Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

scientists use to account for the continued survival in Australia of eucalyptus trees, kangaroos, koala bears, and the duck-billed platypus—namely, the long-continued isolation of early forms, which elsewhere have either died out or changed into something a little more modern. Australia is a large and geologically an ancient country, but in relation to the other large land masses on the earth, it is very "cut-off" and remote. Recent white settlement in Australia has built up large modern cities which are similar in many respects to those in America. During World War II, American troops stationed in these Australian cities were astonished to find so many of their cherished American institutions —department stores, drug stores, movie theaters—located in a country "so far from everywhere." It is this isolation that accounts for the preservation in Australia of plants, animals, and a native race which, deprived of contact with the rest of the world until recently, developed or retained characteristics which are unique in the modern world.

Most of what we know about the first entry of men into Australia is based on probability and inference. Since Australia is in such an out-of-the-way corner of the earth's surface, man is not likely to have originated there. He must therefore have migrated—probably accidentally—from somewhere else. A glance at a world map will show that this migration can hardly have been from any continent other than Asia. The long chain of islands stretching down into the Pacific from the neighborhood of Singapore suggests the obvious migration route. There was a time in the geological past when many of these islands were joined to each other by land bridges which also tied them to Asia and Australia, so that early animals such as marsupials were able to walk (or hop) from Asia to Australia without getting their feet wet. But these land connections disappeared under the ocean long before the appearance of man on earth, and therefore the early ancestors of the Australians, in moving down from Asia through the islands, must have encountered stretches of open ocean on their route. Such inferences pose the general shape of the problem. The early Australians came from Southeast Asia; they came, part of the way at least, by water, and they must have remained isolated in Australia after their arrival.

How early in terms of years these first humans reached Australia can be inferred from indirect evidence. The crucial point is the simplicity of the Australians' tools and weapons. Present-day anthropology does not subscribe to the idea that human technological development has only been along a single line (the doctrine of unilineal cultural evolution), but nonetheless in a rough sense the presence or absence of certain basic pieces of human technology can be used as time indicators. When the Europeans first encountered the natives of southeastern Australia in the 1700's, the following items of technology were completely lacking among them: all use of metal, agriculture, domestic animals (except the dog), pottery, and the bow and arrow. As they had none of these in 1700, the belief is that their ancestors had none of them when they first arrived. Since those ancestors came from Asia via the islands, they must have left Asia before these items of culture were

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

invented or known there. Agriculture, pottery, and metal using were developed comparatively late in human history, but the absence of knowledge of the bow and arrow in the southern parts of Australia is particularly notable since this weapon is relatively ancient and very wide-spread among hunting and gathering peoples. Moreover, its value to hunters is so great that it is unlikely to be given up. Hence, we infer that the earliest Australians migrated down from Southeast Asia at a time so early that knowledge of the bow and arrow had not yet reached that area. Evidence regarding the origin of the bow and arrow is still not certain. In Western Europe this weapon is usually dated as first appearing in the Mesolithic Period (roughly 20,000–6,000 B.C.). Dr. Kroeber includes the bow among the artifacts which the first ancestors of the American Indians carried across Bering Straits around 15,000 B.C. This last date will suffice as an approximation. By 15,000 B.C. the bow and arrow were present in Northeast Asia (that is, the section lying towards Bering Straits) and probably were also known in Southeast Asia. We may hazard the conclusion, therefore, that the ancestors of the Australians must have already left the vicinity of the Asiatic mainland by that date. This leads to the inference that when discovered by Captain Cook in 1770, the Australians had been in Australia for something like 17,000 years,[1] having drifted down from the mainland of Asia possessing only the primitive technological equipment that the rest of the world had evolved at that time. Having arrived "at the end of the line" in Australia, they could go no further, and survived there in isolation, keeping, but not improving upon, the simple technology they had brought with them.

But why were they left alone while other peoples, at later dates, with improved tools and weapons (including the bow and arrow) occupied the islands behind them and beyond them? For today the island chain from the mainland of Asia down to New Guinea and the numerous island groups further out into the Pacific (Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia) are occupied by peoples who not only differ from the Australians in physical type but also possess such cultural items as the bow and arrow, agriculture, domesticated pigs, pottery, and many others, which were unknown in Australia. The answer to this second part of the problem seems to hinge upon the types of ocean transportation employed by these early migrants.

In reconstructing the early culture history of the Pacific region, it is impossible to operate without one general assumption—namely, that the type of tools (including the type of canoe) possessed by a given native people when the white man first arrived was approximately the same as that which the early ancestors of those people brought with them when they first entered the area in question. (This assumption can, of course, only be made if there is strong supporting evidence that changes in the tools (and canoes) *after arrival* were minimal or superficial.) On this assumption the early Australians

[1] So far, very little archaeological investigation has been carried out in Australia. The earliest dated cultural material from the continent is about 8,500 years old. However, Australian archaeologists have located human artifacts which apparently are earlier than this dated culture.

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
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are thought to have arrived in the type of canoes that were still in use by their descendants in the 1700's. These craft, mostly in use in Cook's time on the northern and eastern coasts and the inland waterways, were called canoes by courtesy but were incredibly frail. They consisted of a single sheet of bark bent roughly into the shape of a boat, laced together at the ends, caulked with wild honeycomb or some vegetable gum, their sides held apart by a few sticks. Such "canoes" are little better than rafts; even in calm water they are likely to swamp, capsize, or disintegrate, and the only thing that can be said for them is that when swamped or capsized, the bark will still float, enabling the occupants to cling to the remains, at least briefly. Hanging on to a swamped sheet of bark is not an activity that merits the name seafaring, and in the shark-invested waters around the Australian coastline and in the crocodile-infested rivers of the north it is not conducive to survival. Such canoes were until recently in use here and there by Australians as these craft could be very quickly constructed. But today where the natives use canoes, those made of bark have been replaced by the dugout canoe.[8] No Australian would willingly have ventured very far from land in a bark canoe, and therefore, as we said earlier, the crossing of open stretches of ocean by the first Australians on their migration down from Asia through the Indonesian islands must have been accidental and involuntary, by being blown or carried on, whether they liked it or not. In short, they finally reached the Australian coastline as castaways drifting in from the islands to the northwest or north.[9]

When they arrived on the North Australian coast, their sea wanderings were over, for they possessed no boats which could carry them onward to the far-off Pacific Islands. These first human occupants of Australia had to make the best of the inhospitable country they found. They moved into the large, empty land mass before them and their descendants remained there without much alteration in their way of life for succeeding millennia. Those who stayed near the coast or found rivers to settle along retained the use of crude bark canoes, while those who reached the desert interior forgot about them entirely.

Such a pattern of reasoning brings us to the final question: Why were these Australians left isolated from the influence of later migrants who came by way of the same series of islands? The answer is that all later migrants—whose descendants we know today as Melanesians, Polynesians, or Micronesians—had much better canoes when they left Asia. Hence they could control where they went and had greater freedom to move on further if they did not like an area where they had landed. Evidence seems to suggest that the bulk of these later peoples, and certainly the Melanesian peoples, came from the direction of Southeast Asia around the *northern* side of New Guinea

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[8] Lloyd Warner and others have established that the Australian tribes along the northern coasts learned about dugouts from Malay visitors in relatively recent times. (Warner 1937)

[9] See Andrew Sharp who has recently demonstrated this to be true for the Pacific generally. (Sharp 1957)

1: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

and therefore never approached the northern coasts of Australia at all, being carried on past the eastern end of New Guinea toward the Solomons and the New Hebrides. If any such later peoples did sight or land on the northern coast of Australia, they stayed only briefly, leaving no trace, probably because the region appeared uninviting. More recently, others have also found the northern coastline of Australia unattractive; these include the Japanese Navy, in World War II, which carefully by-passed it and followed the route of the Melanesians along the northern shores of New Guinea, through the Bismarcks and the Admiralties toward the Solomons and Guadalcanal. Thus the early Australians were left in isolated possession of an empty continent during the fifteen thousand or more years following their arrival.

For those who maintain that human progress is an inevitable movement, it should be noted that all the evidence indicates that during those long centuries the Australians remained at almost the same technological level as they were when they first landed.

Australian Culture When the White Men Came

The continent of Australia varies a good deal in such matters as climate, rainfall, and amount of vegetation, but in general it may be said that well over half of it is country in which keeping alive is fairly easy, even for people of such a low level of culture as that represented by the first Australians. In particular, there were no dangerous animals (except snakes), and much of the climate being like that of Southern California, the country was mostly free of tropical jungles and the diseases that are associated with them. For a primitive hunting and gathering people, the main problem of existence in Australia was lack of water, as indeed it still is today, despite modern technology. At least one-third of the continent, comprising about a million square miles, is arid desert or semidesert where rain rarely falls, and the so-called river beds are bone dry for years at a stretch.[4] Elsewhere there are well-watered areas which provide an adequate food supply for a hunting and gathering people. The Murray River Valley in the southeast and the coastal strips along the east, southeast, and north coastlines are the best watered regions, and these were the areas that supported the largest native populations when the white man arrived. But even in such favorable tracts the population was spread very thin. The best estimate of size of the native population for the whole continent before the arrival of Europeans is that within the total area of approximately three million square miles there lived slightly above a quarter of a million people, giving an average density of one person to every twelve square miles. Since over one-third of the continent is almost waterless and could support, then or now, very few humans, the density for the livable parts is more re-

[4] It rained in Alice Springs in Central Australia on New Year's Eve, 1939-40. According to their parents, white children six to seven years old were then seeing rain for the first time in their lives.

I: Hart & Pilling E-5 (1928-1954) 1960
OI20 Tiwi OI20

observe the spontaneous gesture with which men, on leaving the Mission, automatically threw off their loincloths at the Mission fence and headed for the bush as naked as the day they were born. Women, in pre-white days, habitually carried a piece of bark which they held in front of themselves whenever they met a male. As soon as string or rope was introduced by the early white contacts, the women found it more convenient to tie some sort of band around their waists and double the piece of bark over this waistband. This was much handier since it left the hands free, but the bark, being stiff and unsecured, was at best a very capricious covering, and old women in the midst of public arguments often tore off their aprons and threw them at their opponents as a gesture of contempt.

Young women were more decorous and fussed modestly with their bark aprons when young men were present rather in the same way as American coeds fuss with their skirts in crowded classrooms. Theoretically, young women were supposed never to meet either young men or men outside their own household, and so the bark apron, carried in the hand, was in aboriginal times merely something to have in case of emergency. It was noticeable in Tiwi ceremonies that when the women danced, they did nothing with their hands. We think this was because, in pre-white days, their right hands, at least, were needed to hold their bark aprons in front of their pubic regions, since at dances they were in the presence of strange men.

This brief account of the daily and yearly life of the Tiwi households enables us to draw a few important conclusions about their economic life:

1. Compared with many of the mainland tribes, the Tiwi were economically rather well-off, in that the bigger household units were usually able to produce a food surplus.

2. This food surplus varied directly with the number of working wives that a household head possessed.

3. A household head with many wives was therefore, in Tiwi terms, a wealthy man who could retire entirely from the food quest and devote his time to other activities.

4. Such men were able to devote full time to other activities such as manufacturing useful and ceremonial objects and participation in ceremonial affairs and public life.

5. Wealthy men, active in one or all of these pursuits, were the "big men" of the tribe. In each band there were two or three such men, and in the whole tribe perhaps less than twenty had attained full success or were ranked by public opinion as being the most admired and influential. The next chapter examines the career patterns by which every male Tiwi sought to become, and a few succeeded in becoming, a big man.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

101 others that the culture of the Melville and Bathurst Islanders was markedly
121 different from that of the adjacent mainland people.

It seemed evident, also, that this difference in the cultures was the result
101 of isolation for which two possible factors were responsible: (a) the natural
131 water barrier created by the Dundas and Clarence Straits (Fig. 1), and (b)
182 the inability of the Tiwi to cross those swift and dangerous tideways in their
501 primitive canoes. These canoes consisted of no more than a folded sheet of eucalyptus bark, sewn together at either end with strips of lawyer vine, caulked with mud, and strengthened at the gunwales with light saplings. The old men of Melville Island assured me that, before Cooper brought across the mainland wooden canoe (1905) bark canoes were their only means of water transport.

174 I am convinced, from my personal experience with similar canoes in
501 north-eastern Arnhem Land, and my sea journeys across the Dundas and Clarence Straits, that the bark canoes of the Tiwi were far too weak to have withstood the buffetings of those turbulent waters. Nor would it have been possible for the mainlanders to have made the journey before they acquired
[175] the wooden canoes from the Malays, which reliable historical records indi-
[177] cate was not before the end of the eighteenth century.[8] Previous to that time, these people would have had only a bark canoe similar to that used by the Melville and Bathurst Islanders. It would be some time, too, after the aborigines acquired their new wooden craft, before they would be sufficiently skilled to make that perilous journey to Melville Island, even
[609] had they wished to do so. Further, the Tiwi were notably unfriendly and killed anyone who visited their shores. It is likely, then, that during the historically short time that the aborigines of the mainland possessed the wooden canoe, their visits would have had little, if any, effect on the culture of the Tiwi.

From this evidence, it appears certain that for an unknown, and possibly
177 a lengthy period, the aborigines of the Tiwi tribe have been almost, if not
114 completely, isolated from outside cultural influences.

This supposition is supported by Hart (1930, p. 170), who states that, "It was impossible, in fact, quite unnecessary, for them (the Tiwi) to visit the mainland in their bark canoes, . . . Until the advent of white men, the Melville Islanders were not aware that any other people existed but themselves."

Foelsche (1882, p. 17), however, states that "The Melville Islanders occasionally visited the mainland for the purpose of stealing lubras (women),

[8] Mountford, 1956, p. 410.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

in which they invariably succeeded. Their canoes and weapons were similar to the mainland."[6]

The probability that the Tiwi have been isolated from external influences for a long time is still further supported by their culture. Their artefacts are remarkably simple—they do not even possess a spear-thrower or small mounted stone tools—their art forms and ceremonial life are unlike those in any other part of Australia, there are no secret rituals, and the social status of the women is on a much higher plane than that of any other aboriginal women.

[6] From the evidence given above we can safely discard this writer's statement. Foelsche, who was a police officer in Darwin, probably quoted a rumour without checking its accuracy.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

CHAPTER II

The Creation Period

WHATEVER differences may exist between the Melville Island cultures and those of the mainland, and, in some aspects, those differences are considerable, the creation stories indicate that the two cultures sprang from the same source.[1]

At the close of the creation period, both on Melville Island and the mainland, the original creators, men and women, were transformed, or transformed themselves, into various creatures, plants, natural forces or heavenly bodies.

Although I would not claim that the list of totems is complete, I feel certain that the aboriginal artists pictured, on the bark paintings, most of the areas created by their mythical forbears. More detailed research may reveal additional totemic places.

The list of the thirty-four totemic ancestors illustrated on the bark paintings is curiously unbalanced in its distribution. More than a third of these are trees, almost all eucalypts. The remaining four groups are: the natural forces, creatures of the air, the sea, and one inanimate totem, i.e. red ochre. Neither land animals nor reptiles are referred to in the bark paintings of the totemic places, although they appear in the myths.

These facts contrast strongly with the Central Australian beliefs regarding their totemic creatures (Mountford, 1948, p. 23; Spencer and Gillen, 1899, p. 387), where almost every living thing, particularly the creatures, took some part in the creation of the topography; plant totems are uncommon in Central Australia.

The same Central Australian characteristics are also evident in the myths of Groote Eylandt (Mountford, 1956, p. 21), although in the adjacent Arnhem Land, the great creators, i.e., the *Wawalik* Sisters (Warner, 1937, p. 250), and the *Djunkgao* Sisters (Berndt, 1952; Mountford, 1956, p. 267; Warner, 1937, p. 336), made the bulk of the topography, plants and creatures.

Although the Groote Eylandt pantheon, like that of Melville Island, originated as men and women, they were, almost without exception, changed to non-human totems, whereas the great creators of Arnhem Land, the *Wawalik* and the *Djunkgao* Sisters, have always remained human.

[1] Little research has been carried out on the creation stories of the Australian aborigines; Spencer and Gillen (1899, p. 387) giving the most detailed account.

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2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

3. THE DEATH OF PURUKUPALI

While many of the people of the early creation period were spreading over the island, the original family, *Wuriupranala*, *Murupiangkala* and *Purukupali*, and their descendants, had established themselves on south-eastern Melville Island; *Murupiangkala*, with her daughter *Tukumbuna* and her grandchildren, *Tukimbini*, *Wilinduala* and *Numanirakala*, at Murupianga; *Wuriupranala* with her son *Wuriuprinili*, at Wuriupi; and *Purukupali*, his wife *Bima* and their infant son, *Djinini*, at Impanali (Fig. 1).

Purukupali was strongly attached to *Djinini*. Every morning, when *Bima* went out food-gathering, she would take *Djinini* with her, bringing him back to *Purukupali* at the end of the day, together with the food she had collected.

In the same camp lived an unmarried man, *Tjapara*, who used to persuade *Bima* to leave her child asleep under the shade of a tree and sneak into the forest with him. This intrigue had been going on for some time when, on one very hot day, *Bima* stayed away from her child too long, for, when she returned, the shade had moved and *Djinini* was lying dead in the hot sun. Distraught with grief, *Bima* chanted her song of remorse—

Bili wangia tingatia
(Evil woman am I to have caused the death of my son.)

When *Purukupali* heard of the death of *Djinini*, his anger knew no bounds.[18] Striking his wife on her head with a throwing stick, and hunting her into the forest, he decreed that death should come to the whole world. As his son had died, said *Purukupali*, so the whole of creation would die, and once dead, never again would come to life. There was no death before that time.

Tjapara remonstrated with *Purukupali*, and pleaded for the dead body of *Djinini*, promising to restore him to life in three days.[19] But *Purukupali* was so adamant that the two men quarrelled about this matter until *Purukupali*, losing his temper, threw a *muruguna* (Pl. 32D) at *Tjapara* who replied with the forked throwing stick, *miluanta* (Pl. 32C) known today as *Tjapara's muruguna*. Soon the two men were locked in a deadly struggle, each wounding the other severely in the face and body.

[18] My informant stated that it was not the intrigues of *Tjapara* and *Bima* that enraged *Purukupali*, but that, by their selfishness, they had caused the death of his son.

[19] This is a reversal of ideas. In the mainland myths it is the moon that brings death to mankind (Mountford, 1956, p. 503), but among the Tiwi, it is the moon who endeavours to prevent death coming to the world. This is one of the many factors that suggest that the Tiwi must have been separated from the effects of the mainland cultures for a considerable period.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

elaborately shaped nor decorated, often being covered with no more than a series of dots.[1]

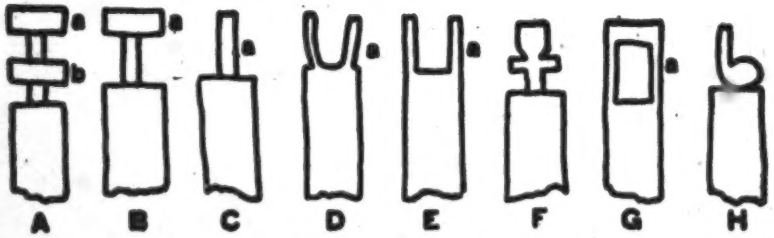

FIG. 8. *The Burial Poles*

Origin of the Pukamuni Poles

At present we have no evidence to show whether the custom of erecting burial poles around the grave in such numbers, not as a memorial, but as a gift to the dead, is confined entirely to the Tiwi tribe, or whether it is used in any other part of the world, and has reached the Tiwi by diffusion. There certainly are no similar burial poles on the Australian continent.

In north-eastern Arnhem Land, some of the decorated log coffins are as high as seven feet.[2] But the function of those coffins bears no relationship to that of the burial poles of Melville Island, the former being no more than coffins to hold the bones, and the latter, gifts to please the spirit of the dead.

It is possible that, during the long period of isolation from the mainland cultures, the Melville Islanders may have changed coffins of north-eastern Arnhem Land into the burial poles of the Tiwi.

The only examples of burial posts outside of Australia known to me, that are in any way comparable in function to those on Melville Island, are the *malanggan* burial ornaments of New Ireland described by Kramer.[3]

Methods of Manufacture

Although, at the conclusion of the *pukamuni* rituals, the grave is totally neglected and the poles allowed to decay, the "workers", using steel axes[4]

[1] Although *Tjamalampua* is not fully correct (see Bremer's and Campbell's statement in the early nineteenth century, pp. 107, 108), it indicates that both the poles and their painted decorations have, with the passing of the years, and the acquisition of steel tools, become more complex.

[2] Mountford, 1956, p. 317. [3] Kramer, 1925.

[4] The evidence of Bremer, Spencer and the aborigines, suggests that before the advent of metal the only cutting tools owned by the aborigines would have been crude stone axes, and the shells of cockles. It is likely that, under these conditions, the poles would

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

765 and the hardest and most durable timber available, spared no pains to make the best poles they could.[6]

×532 765 When the "workers" had finished shaping the poles they notified the leader of the *pukamuni* ceremony, who then gave the order for the poles to be scorched over a fire of blazing leaves to make a black ground on which to paint the design (Mountford, 1956, p. 427). Then, setting up the poles in a double row near the grave (Mountford, 1956, p. 426), the men began their task of decoration (Pl. 33B, D). At the same time, the ceremonial leader sent message sticks (p. 98) to notify the outlying groups that the final rituals were about to start.

386 The materials used for decoration were: red and yellow ochres from Imilu, Cape Van Diemen, a white ochre from a beach nearby, crushed charcoal for black, one of three types of fixatives, i.e., the white of turtle eggs, wild honey and beeswax mixed together, and the particularly gelatinous sap of one of the tree orchids.

The ochres were crushed, mixed with water and one or more of the fixatives, and applied to the poles with brushes made from chewed strips of bark or vines (Fig. 2).

517 ×532 As I watched these primitive artists at work, I was impressed with the care they took in the arranging of their simple patterns, and with the obvious pleasure they experienced in their work. A quiet air of contentment pervaded the outdoor studio as each of the ten artists made his own pole as beautiful as possible.

Each artist appeared to be certain as to the designs he would use; there was no evidence of copying; in fact, *Pulanimbuwi* showed me the rough draft of the designs of his pole (Pl. 35A, B, Fig. 9), scratched on the back of a cigarette tin, days before he had even felled the tree.

×532 765 A puzzling aspect of the *pukamuni* poles is the wide variety of the painted designs used, and the almost total absence in those designs of any reference to the myths and totemic localities.[6]

At first sight it would appear that the pole shapes, collected by both Fry and myself, were inventions of the moment. An analysis of the poles

174 412 322 have simpler shapes than at the present time, although Campbell (1834, p. 158) speaks about "poles with tops like lances and halberts". The aborigines may have used fire to assist in the shaping of the poles, in fact, this is suggested by Klaatsch (1907, p. 587).

[5] Not far from our camp was the deserted grave of the father of *Muramajua* (Pl. 38D), who died when his son was an infant. *Muramajua* was then over forty years old, yet the poles, although somewhat eroded and disarranged by the elements, are still in a fair state of preservation.

[177] [6] This and old *Tjamalampua's* statement, p. 109, could indicate that the poles and their designs are a recent cultural trait that is not yet fully absorbed into the culture.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

pole at Punata on Apsley Straits (Fig. 1), while I saw and photographed the third example in the form of a highly conventionalized human figure (Pl. 38A, B, C), which was on an old grave not far from our camp. No doubt there are other examples of these poles on the deserted graves of the Islands. I saw recently, in the Musée Ethnographique et Musée Suisse de Folklore, Bâle, Switzerland, two full-length human figures which had been collected at Bathurst Island by Mr. Karel Kupta in 1956.

This evidence indicates that, for thirty years, at least, the men and women of the Tiwi,[11] occasionally carved burial poles in human form; we do not know when the practice of carving the smaller figures[12] began.

At first sight it appeared that these wooden figures might have been a cultural trait borrowed, as in north-eastern Arnhem Land, from the Malay trepangers. Further research, however, did not confirm this hypothesis.

Although now and again some Malay prau, driven off its course by contrary winds, must have touched the shores of either Melville or Bathurst Island, it is certain that the men of the Tiwi, who were notably unfriendly, would have endeavoured to drive them away. This unfriendliness probably explains why the Malays were not able to establish themselves on these Islands as they did in north-eastern Arnhem Land. The old men of the Tiwi do not remember any Malay fishermen visiting their country. This evidence that the Malays did not settle on the land of the Tiwi is further supported by Campbell (1834), who writes (p. 143), "The Malays were never seen near Melville Island", and later (p. 155), ". . . Malay fishermen were forbidden to go near Melville Island . . . alleging that it was infested with pirates. . . ."

This evidence suggests that the Tiwi practice of carving human figures in wood was not, like that of the aborigines of Arnhem Land, borrowed from a Malayan source, but is a recent local development, probably stimulated by the acquisition of steel tools and the other possessions of the white man. For instance, it would be easy to imagine a skilled aboriginal trying to make his pole resemble the tall bodies of the white man's saints in the mission church. From these larger would develop the smaller figures.

It is unlikely that any elaborately carved burial pole, much less one in the form of a human figure, would be more than fifty years old. Before that time, except those stolen from the short-lived Fort Dundas settlement, the Tiwi would have owned few, if any steel tools.

Although the Tiwi have no specific myth about the larger burial poles,

[11] A woman may cut a burial pole instead of her husband, should he be absent.

[12] There is a difference, however, between the two; the *tudini* poles, in human form, are cut from the hardest and most durable eucalypt; the smaller figures from the soft wood of the beach kapok, a wood which is quickly destroyed by insects.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

they do have one which explains, to their satisfaction, the origin of the small figures.[15]

On the occasion of the first *pukamuni* at Tapararimi, a man, *Piamatilidjara*, who later become the tawny frogmouth (*Podargus strigoides*), made and painted a small figure, similar to Pl. 40c, r. This he placed on the grave to impersonate *Purukupali*, whose body was not buried there, he having walked into the sea and drowned himself.

At present these human figures, both large and small, are made, either at the request of the chief mourner, or by the "worker" himself. This happens if the man cutting the pole, holding the dead person in especial esteem, wishes to please his spirit. The smaller figures may represent either a son of the dead or mythical men and women of creation times.

When the burial poles are being erected, one of them, in human form, or a smaller figure, is occasionally placed at the head of the grave.[16] The *mopaditi*, on leaving its body, sees the wooden figure, and thinking it is either its son, or one of its old companions, stays at the grave and talks to it about old times. These wooden figures have no *imunka* (life essence), nevertheless the *mopaditi*, who is believed to be stupid and easily misled, thinks it is talking to a living person.

I collected two burial poles (Pl. 39) in the form of highly conventionalized human beings, and six smaller, full-length figures (Pl. 40, 41). I also photographed a pole, in human form, on an old grave (Pl. 38A, B, C).

Pl. 39A, B, C, is a *pukamuni* pole representing a performer, ready to take part in the final burial rituals. The projection *m* (39B), is his hair; *n*, *n*, are his ears, and *o*, *o*, his arms; *p* is a *tokwianga* (goose-feather ball), and *s*, (39A), his backbone.

The cross-hatched squares, *a*, *a*, *a* (39A), represent patches of grass on the floor of the jungle; the designs, *e*, *e*, *e*, jungle trees, and *b*, *b*, *b*, spider webs in the branches.

The waves of the sea are indicated by the bands of short vertical lines, *c*, *c*, *c*; a boulder on the sea-shore by oval *f* (39A); oysters on the rocks by the squares with diagonal lines, *d*, *d*, and paper-bark trees by the groups of intersecting lines at *s*, *s*.

The designs on the face and head (39C) are: *k*, edible fruit, *h*, grass in

[15] This myth does not necessarily indicate great age because those of non-literate people tend to keep up-to-date. Mountford, 1956, p. 98, and Worsley, 1955, p. 856, both give examples of how the Groote Eylandt aborigines have incorporated foreign elements in their creation stories.

[16] This is only one of many safeguards used by the Tiwi to keep the *mopaditi* away from the camp of its old companions, particularly during the first few days after death.

2: Mountford E-5 (1954) 1958
OI20 Tiwi OI20

CONCLUSION

105 171 This study of the Tiwi tribe of Melville and Bathurst Islands, made through the medium of their art, their myths, and their ceremonies, reveals wide differences between many phases of their cultural life and that of the aborigines who live on the adjacent mainland. These differences are probably the result of isolation caused by the dangerous tideways which have separated the two peoples from each other for an unknown, but probably lengthy, period.

[174] Though both are of aboriginal stock, and from the same cultural background (as indicated by basically similar creation stories), this isolation has allowed the two groups to develop independently. It may well be that the beliefs of the Tiwi represent those of one of the aboriginal migrations to Australia, and has remained somewhat constant, while the mainland people, enriched by occasional waves of new ideas, have developed a much more varied philosophical and cultural life.

The main differences between the two cultures can be summarized as follows:

171 x 532 (a) The art forms of the Melville and Bathurst Islands are so highly formalized that they seldom resemble the objects they represent. In contrast, the art of their neighbours on the mainland, the Arnhem Land aborigines, is not only entirely representational, but is probably a more vital and colourful art than exists in any other part of the continent.

171 765 (b) Compared with the rest of Australia, too, the ceremonies of the Tiwi are particularly limited, there being only two in the whole culture. The major ceremony, that of burial, is by far the more elaborate. It extends over several months, involves the co-operation of many people, and provides the tribe with a complete outlet for their grief, their music, their dancing, and their art. This ceremony is without parallel in Australia, and, so far as we know, elsewhere in the world.

171 881 The other ceremony, the Kulama, is a blending of several rituals: the initiation of men and women into the social grades of the tribe; the ceremony of preparing a poisonous yam for food,[68] which ceremony the participants believe prolongs the wet season; and the airing of grievances

[114] [68] Spencer, 1928, p. 661, speaks of the Kulama as a food increase ritual. It is probable that Spencer was only expressing an opinion, having previously carried out research in Central Australia where increase rituals are both numerous and important. I did not obtain any evidence which indicated that food increase rituals were carried out by the Tiwi.

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YOUNG GIRL AND BOY accompany fathers as men bring yams from pool to the ceremonial ring. There the yams will be

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part of Tiwi speech. Poetic license in pronunciation and syllabification often occurs. The Tiwi have high regard for the linguistic ability needed to become a good Tiwi composer and singer, and instruction in the art of song composition and delivery is given to the initiates. Each initiate must perform in the *Kulama* before he can be considered a "graduate." According to my Tiwi informants, this requirement is the hardest of all, and it is also the reason for there being no set age for initiation. The old people are said to watch the young, and when the observers consider them mature enough, they swoop down upon their choices "like chicken hawks, without warning"—as the Tiwi say—and start the initiates along the path to adulthood.

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As far as I know, the *Kulama* ceremony has no parallel elsewhere in Australia. And there are many interesting questions that come to mind concerning the origin of the *Kulama* as it exists today. For instance, why is instruction in the preparation of a poisonous yam that is not part of the daily diet considered so important for initiation into adulthood? What is the origin of the idea that a yam has power over good and evil, and health and sickness? Why is such prominence accorded a yam in what is principally a hunting and gathering society?

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Any answers to these questions must be highly speculative, for the origin of the ceremony and its development lie in the unrecorded history of the Tiwi. However, I believe the following statements may well be valid.

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Instruction in the natural resources of the land was considered vital to becoming an adult. Because the *Kulama* yam is poisonous and is not widely distributed, it was never part of the regular diet, but it could be used in economic emergencies if properly prepared. Instruction in its preparation was therefore extremely important as a potential survival measure. However, since the Tiwi live in a favorable environment, it is highly probable that such emergencies were very rare, so it was considered expedient to hold annual instruction periods. Because knowledge of

[See P. 15(A) for other part of caption and picture --analyst]

884 the technique had to be made meaningful to the initiates,
194 the lifesaving qualities of this famine food were explained as health-giving powers. A ceremony accompanied by song and dance was certainly a dramatic and effective means of impressing the initiates in preparation methods. The ritual
[180] served another purpose as well: because traveling is so difficult during the rainy season, each household is isolated from the others. The *Kulama* ritual follows this period, and it is natural to expect a reunion to be an occasion to exchange news, settle differences, and tell stories or sing songs that keep traditions alive.

885 MUCH harder to account for is the Tiwi idea of adulthood. That every adult is solely responsible for his own health and wealth, and that success in life depends entirely on personal behavior and industry, are ideals
[171] strangely similar to those that underlie the American way of life, despite the great gulf between the aboriginal culture and our own. But it is not at all surprising that the Tiwi
177 have a great sympathy for much of Western civilization. Many hold the same views as the *Kulama* singer quoted earlier in this article who saw his children wearing clothes
[181] and shoes and going to school to learn to write, for this is the Tiwi's contemporaneous idea of success in a way of life introduced to them only a few short years ago.

Early in the summer of 1962 I revisited the Tiwi for
[114] two weeks. Although I knew that the Tiwi desired schooling and training in European ways of life and would seize any such opportunity afforded them, I was hardly prepared for the tremendous changes that had taken place during the eight years that had elapsed since my first visit.

Three months after the *Kulama* ceremony of 1954, a
[871] government school was opened. Now all the Tiwi children go to school, and some who have finished the six-year program in the government school have received subsequent training as teaching or nursing assistants. Some others have had "on-the-job" training in various activities connected with a large-scale forestry project that has been started on Melville Island. In fact, all the able-bodied Tiwi men and women are currently employed, and their tasks bear little or no relation to their old life in the bush.

It is perhaps significant—but to me not at all surprising—that I did not hear a single real complaint from the Tiwi regarding their new manner of living. They seem to like it and are anticipating bigger and better things (in the
[224] Western sense) for their children. Hunting has become
[868] a week-end diversion and the children receive little or no real instruction in that traditional skill.

178 SOME aspects of Tiwi life are slow to die, however. Most
784 of the old taboos, the observance of which was considered necessary in the past in order to insure health and wealth, are still observed, although at least one teen-ager expressed doubt that the taboos had any actual effect on
177 the outcome of one's life. Western medicine and public
884 health practices are fast replacing belief in the *Kulama*. During the past eight years only three men have begun the six years of training for *Kulama* initiation, and some of the older men no longer participate in the ceremony. However, as long as even a small number of Tiwi believe in the *Kulama*, the ritual will survive, but I doubt that it will for long.

000 NEAR END of *Kulama* ceremony, performer, although hoarse and tired, must continue to sing until late in the night.
[P. 16, (B)]